

# KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws Editor. All answers appear in the Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue. Guest editors will continue to appear occasionally.

## The Alphabet Flag

* * * * *	MNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
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* * * * *	MNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
* * * * *	MNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
* * * * *	MNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPQRSTUVWXYZ	
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPQRSTUVWXYZ	
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPQRSTUVWXYZ	

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United Letters of the Alphabet, and to the language for which it stands, one grammar on the page, individual, with words and sentences for all.

## UnSherlock Unbound

In my November 1987 Kickshaws, I posed a problem and asked "Can you unSherlock this one?" In the May 1988 Colloquy, George Scheetz protested that the word should mean "to not solve a mystery." In the August 1988 Word Ways, Harry Partridge wrote a wonderfully detailed article defending the original usage. With a tip of the Alphabet Hat to both Harry and George, here's my own response. Each word, except unSherlock, can be found in the U's above the line in Webster's Collegiate, and each is used correctly. Some words have been pluralized or changed to different tenses. After reading it, reread it without the "un's."

Unworldly unreason un.masks unknown unconcerns, unbuilds unsafety, uncages uncertainty. Unintelligence uneasily uncrowns unreality. Unlike unbalanced unreserves, unconsidered unconstitution-al, untimely unsophistication unmakes unequals. Unthink, unlearn,

unteach: Unalternatives unnecessarily undouble unmeanings. Un-speak unofficial unlikelihoods? Unwish unwritten unlikelinesses! Unto unsound unbeliefs, unsay, "Untried, untrue!" Unveil unimproved unwisdom, unweaving unequivocally. Unbe: Uncanny Un-Sherlock unwas.

I unrest my case.

### From Unbirthday to Nonbirthday

In Through the Looking Glass, Humpty-Dumpty talks about an un-birthday present, which is "A present given when it isn't your birthday, of course." Since Carroll's time, there have been many modern advances in birthday technology. Here are a dozen:

**ARCHBIRTHDAY** Your favorite all-time birthday, with the best gifts, the best cake, and the best party, against which all your other birthdays compare unfavorably for the rest of your life.

**SUBBIRTHDAY** The birthday of a sibling. Since it's less important than yours, your sibling deserves fewer presents.

**PREBIRTHDAY** The day before your birthday, traditionally reserved for reminding people that tomorrow is your birthday.

**POSTBIRTHDAY** The day after your birthday, traditionally reserved for snubbing people who forgot your birthday yesterday.

**EXBIRTHDAY** The belated birthday that a friend wishes you a few days too late. In general, exbirthday cakes are stale.

**ALTERBIRTHDAY** The substitute birthday that the unlucky person born on leapday celebrates during nonleapyears instead. Pathetic!

**REBIRTHDAY** The birthday experienced by born-again Christians after they've been reborn. Rebirthday cakes have halos over them.

**PSEUDOBIRTHDAY** The birthday that kids who are too young to drink have on their fake ID's. Pseudobirthdays are illegal.

**ANTIBIRTHDAY** The birthday of someone you hate. Antibirthday presents are usually dangerous.

**COBIRTHDAY** The birthday that you and a friend share. It's somewhat narcissistic to give each other gifts.

**PARABIRTHDAY** The birthday that falls on another big holiday, such as Christmas, Hannukah, etc. The poor unfortunate usually doesn't get the normal share of presents, best wishes, or a party.

**NONBIRTHDAY** The birthday that is forgotten by everyone, including the noncelebrant. On nonbirthdays, no one gets nonbirthday cakes, nonbirthday parties, and nonbirthday presents. If someone remembers, though, it automatically reverts to a birthday.

### Those Once-in-a-Lifetime Celebrations

Speaking of birthdays, have you celebrated your 10,000th day on earth? I did, and a friend gave me a combat helmet to prove it. Below is a list of some of the more outstanding moments to jot down on your life's calendar. Each amount on the right side should be added to your exact moment of birth to figure out when the time on the left occurs. Remember to take leapdays into account. I hope you have (or had) a Happy Billionth Birth Second. Although the party is quick, you'll always treasure the memory.

1,000,000th second	11 days, 13 hrs, 46 mins, 40 secs
10,000,000th second	115 days, 17 hrs, 46 mins, 40 secs
100,000,000th second	3 years, 62 days, 9 hrs, 46 mins, 40 secs
1,000,000,000th second	31 years, 259 days, 1 hr, 46 mins, 40 secs
100,000th minute	69 days, 10 hrs, 40 mins
1,000,000th minute	1 year, 329 days, 10 hrs, 40 mins
10,000,000th minute	19 years, 9 days, 10 hrs, 40 mins
1,000th hour	41 days, 16 hrs
10,000th hour	1 year, 51 days, 16 hrs
100,000th hour	11 years, 151 days, 16 hrs
1,000th day	2 years, 270 days
10,000th day	27 years, 145 days

### The Forty-Letter Paradox

Do you agree with the logic of the statements below? If so, then look at the logic in Answers and Solutions.

A sentence must contain forty letters to be true.

This sentence does have a total of forty letters.

Therefore the second sentence is a true sentence.

### Endless Sentences

One must understand that to understand infinity one must understand that to understand infinity one must understand that to understand infinity one must understand that to understand infin..

Of course, an infinite number of other endless sentences could be constructed in English, but Spanish has them all beat. The single Spanish word COMO can generate a sentence which is not only endless but beginningless. Two translations of COMO are the verb phrase "I eat" and the conjunction "as" ("in the way that"). The following is a finite fragment of a one-word two-directionally endless sentence:

...como como como como como como como como como ...

By hopping aboard at any COMO, you can translate it as "I eat as I eat as I eat as I eat..." Not only that, but it's an infinite palindrome, whose letters spell the same word over and over in the opposite direction. Finally, if any number of COMOs were written in a circle, they, too, could be read both ways as an endless sentence, suggesting the paradoxical image of the snake eating its own tail!

### ¡Que Puta!

In Venezuelan Spanish, there's a curious slang metamorphosis involving the word PUTA, a shortening of the English-looking espanol for "prostituta." If you say "¡que puta!" to a little girl, it's a term of endearment meaning something like "what a darling!" (though it translates into English as "what a whore!"). Other affectionate words are PUTITA and PUTICA ("little whore") and PUTONA and PUTISIMA ("big whore"). Oddly enough, these words are

considered always obscene in most other Latin countries. Spanish also allows individual words to be extended indefinitely by lengthening an augmentative like "-isima." A doting relative could call a little girl a PUTISISISISISISISISISIMA, but that would be stretching it, as Borgmann might've said, "beyond language." According to my wife, the age at which PUTA and its variants cease to be cute is the age at which a female knows what it really means. At that point, she's likely to slap you in the face!

### One for the Guinness Book of World Records

PRETENTIOUSNESS	This rhymed poem has a greater ratio
When licentiousness	of letters to words than any other rhymed
Is contentiousness,	poem in the history of the literature
Is sententiousness	of any language on any planet in the
Conscientiousness?	visible universe: 10.625 letters per word.
	Can you "translate" it (see Answers and
	Solutions)?

### Chandlerisms

In one of his hard-boiled detective stories, Raymond Chandler wrote: "She was the kind of blonde that could make a bishop kick a hole through a stained-glass window." I told this to a friend, who promptly came back with his own version: "She (or he) was the kind of person that could make a catalog librarian drop a drawer." Other friends invented more examples, mostly with female subjects. Certainly logological pros can top these rookie efforts. Have you Chandlerized someone lately?

She was the kind of gal who'd make a dogcatcher get the rabies  
 She was the kind of redhead that could make a Communist salute  
 She was the kind of dame that could make a bricklayer lay bricks  
 She was the kind of customer that could make a grocer grosser  
 She was the kind of lady who could make a linguist speak in  
     tongues  
 He was the kind of guy who could make a nun kick the habit

### Trio for One Voice

They will go, you see, always a touch short and quiet. Play, man, a loud trumpet. Music alone can't please even your mean soul. Everything that she knows, thinks, or desires will fade. Remember: In your song, sleep is just a refrain, silence from something going on in your noisy mind. Houses now may take the money growing each month. Day fools all the year, World, because of the trees outside. Where is life not again inside leaves?

They go see a short, quiet man. Loud music can't even mean everything. She thinks desires fade in song. Is a silence something on your mind now? Take money each day, all year, because the outside is not inside.

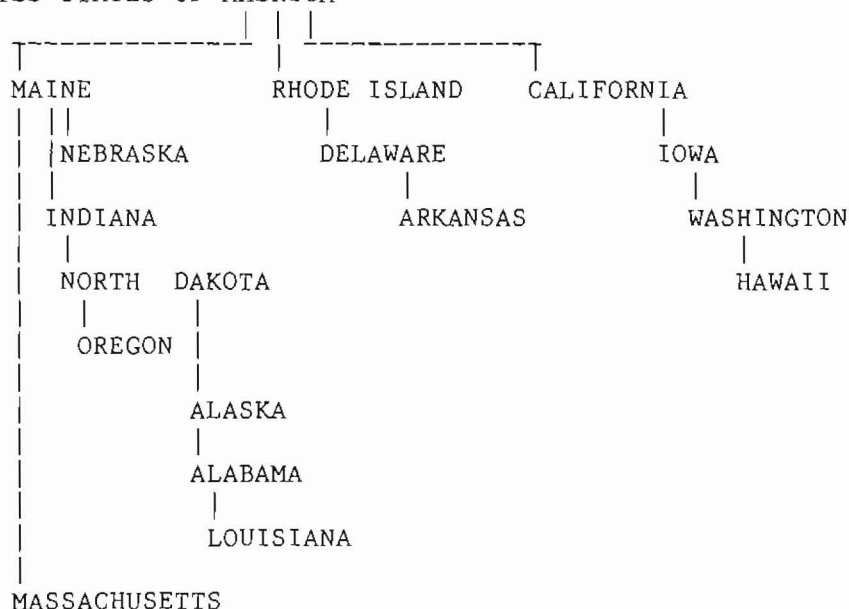
Will you always touch and play a trumpet alone? Please your soul that knows or will remember your sleep. Just refrain from going in noisy houses. May, the growing month, fools the world of trees, where life again leaves.

What is unusual about these three stanzas in this prose poem?

## The Postal Union

The US Postal Service has its own version of our country already mapped out. According to the postal codes, only 16 states are directly linked to the Union. The flow-chart "map" below explains it all. Starting with AMERICA, containing ME (Maine), RI (Rhode Island), and CA (California), the lines flow down to those other states, where other states flow down via their postal codes to other states, and so on. The map can be traced in different ways, but all result in 16 states to the exclusion of the other 34--a risky political situation!

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Before a second Civil War breaks out over this, there are ways to reunite most of the missing states by plotting them "above" mapped states whose abbreviations are contained in the unmapped states. For instance, both WASHINGTON and OHIO have HI for HAWAII, but OHIO can't be mapped since no state has the abbreviation OH in it. Instead, OHIO could be mapped above HAWAII, whose abbreviation is in OHIO.

The completed map would be quite complicated. Twenty-seven of the unmapped states can be connected to at least one mapped state, and many to more than one. But 3 states have to be mapped in a second step onto the added states, and 4 states can't be mapped at all.

Can you figure out the 3 two-step states and how they can be connected to the mapped states? Which are the 4 unmappable states that have succeeded in seceding completely? Which unmapped state is most versatile in that it can be connected to 4 mapped states, and what are those states? Which mapped state is most versatile in that 8 unmapped states can be connected to it, and what are those states? For answers, see Answers and Solutions.

## Country and Western Musicology

I grew up listening to Country Music. My grandpa was a hill-billy from Flat River, Missouri, and he always had C & W on the radio. His last sentence on earth, before going to that big honky-tonk in the sky, was a pure country commentary on death: "It's just like downtown, only not so crowded." We listened to the poetic, bitter, funny wisdom of Johnny Cash, Buck Owens, Patsy Cline, The Carter Family, Hank Williams, Loretta Lynn, and many others. In the August 1985 **Word Ways**, Eric Albert presented a list of Country Music song titles. As a follow-up, here's a bucketful of Country lines, some of which are also the titles:

My wife ran off with my best friend, and I miss him  
 You can't even do wrong right  
 It's the bottle against the Bible in the battle for Daddy's soul  
 If today was a fish, I'd throw it back in  
 Thank God and Greyhound she's gone  
 Your love left a ring around my finger  
 Her and the car and the mobile home was gone, Boys, I came  
     home to a vacant lot  
 What's the use to try to get over you? I've still got you all  
     over me  
 Put the hearse in reverse, I wanna live again  
 Don't cry down my back, baby, you might rust my spurs  
 It's commode-huggin' time in the valley  
 I gave her a ring, and she gave me the finger  
 When you leave me, honey, walk out backwards so I'll think  
     you're comin' in  
 She took everything but the blame  
 We called it magic, then we called it tragic, then finally we  
     called it quits

### A Farm of Confusion

A pair of oxes  
 Were pulling boxes,  
 Or was it oxen  
 Pulling boxen?  
 And each big box  
 Had a couple of locks,  
 Or was it a bock  
 With one big lock?

Perhaps it was oxen  
 Who opened the loxen  
 On all of the boxen.

Or maybe just oxes  
 Who broke the loxes  
 To get to the boxes.

Or only one ock  
 Who forced the lock  
 On a single bock.

### A Tangled Web of Words

In the following paragraph, a simple mystery unfolds. But the paragraph is a hyper-complex sentence containing a clause within a clause within a clause for a total of 25 clauses. Can you untangle the web of clauses to solve the mystery? Who is the accused? What is the verdict? What are the crimes? What is the real name of the real criminal? Let's see you unChandler this one!

Big Mike, when Susan, without whom he, whose rugged jaw, as he muttered, "Why did you, who committed, after you changed your

name, though nobody---" but he paused, while he glared at her, even though Melissa thought, which seemed immaterial, for the courtroom, where the judge, before the verdict, whether Big Mike was guilty, though Melissa, since Ted no longer, however she, when Big Mike, because she blamed him, while the cops, who trusted, although they sensed, until Detective Jennings, against his better judgment, fell in love with the lady, her guilt, her innocence, held him at gunpoint, for her bank robbery, was picked up, played her cards, wanted to buy diamonds for her, murdered him with a dagger, or framed, could be decided, heard Susan's surprise testimony, was packed with an angry mob, to the prosecuting attorney, of Ted as her real lover, in the witness stand, to catch his breath, "--seems to realize, from Melissa to Joyce, both crimes, lay your rap on me?" under his breath, was clenched bitterly, wouldn't have been arrested, fingered him, was found guilty!

### A Couple of Celebrity Quatrains

A molten barrel  
Of malt in beer'll  
Melt 'n' boil  
For Milton Berle.

In the dull smog  
The small dog  
Made pert barks  
At Bert Parks.

### The Weirdest Name Afoot

LEVENDY (accent on the first syllable) is the strangest first name I've ever encountered. My friend, Ralston Bedge, told me he knew the guy, the son of a unwed mother who named him after his father's shoe size: Eleven-D.

### Quick Pshaws

What's the opposite of a Ford Pick-Up? Answer: A Nixon Put-Down...Bumper sticker seen in Vancouver: TO ALL YOU VIRGINS, THANKS FOR NOTHING...Zen headline from a local paper: BOARD FILLS HOLE IN POST...Most laughed-at suggestion made by an Iowa governor: Change Iowa's slogan from A PLACE TO GROW to A STATE OF MINDS...The word GULLIBLE is not in the big MW-3 Dictionary...

### Towers of Babel

1	2	3	4	5	6
OR	BAN	INT	PE	XT	TVI
TE	SCI	TE	RA	TAN	TEN
LT	NIS	TI	EL	RE	VEO
ER	NI	FRI	HA	DN	APC
EX	OM	OG	AK	URE	TIT
RE	PU	UI	ST	OSU	REM
RI	UAL	PH	DE	IM	ONI
Ll	TER	ON	TN	AD	TIN
SU	ENT	GA	PE	MA	TEA
NG	NCT	RE	CO	ROH	ULT

Each stack of letters above contains 3 fairly common words (from the MWPD) of 1 to 4 syllables. Can you put the letters together



to find the words? Stack 1 has bigrams whose letters appear in the same order as in their original words. Stack 2 has bigrams and trigrams with letters also in the right order. Stack 3 has the letters in the right order, but one bigram is a red herring that doesn't belong there. Stack 4 has bigrams only, but half of them have the letters in reverse order. Stack 5 has bigrams and trigrams with some letters in the right order, some in reverse order, and some simply jumbled up. Stack 6 has trigrams with none of the letters in the right order. See Answers and Solutions for answers.

### Literary Tongue Twisters

She saw Shelley sell seashells  
 Pound proofread Prufrock's profound preface  
 Were Wordsworth's words worth Wordsworth's work?  
 Bowdler's bawdy bard's body  
 Keats kicks cats

### ...And One-Line Parodies

It is the yeast, and Juliet is the bun (Shakespeare)  
 In the womb, the wombmene come and go (T. S. Eliot)  
 Donut, go gentle into that good bite (Dylan Thomas)  
 I thundered only as a cloud (Wordsworth)  
 O, my luv is like a red, red nose (Burns)

### Numbergrams and Numberdromes

Anagrams and palindromes are fairly easy to make/find. They involve working directly with letters. However, the following rule makes the task geometrically more challenging: Convert the letters of a word into their alphapositional values and work with the numbers. The source for the words below is Webster's Seventh Collegiate.

For numbergrams, switch the numbers around, breaking apart two-digit numbers and splicing them to one-digit numbers in order to generate a new set of letters to make the new word(s). The new word(s) should have at least one letter that doesn't appear in the original word. Perfect numbergrams have no letters repeated. For example, take the letter values of LED (12,5,4) and switch the digits around to (15,24) to yield OX. Here are a few more numbergrams, all of which can be reconstructed numerically. Word to word: AY-EL; DAY-BEN; AERIAL-SOUR; OR-AGE; ADAM-MAN. Word to phrase: YOU-A BOY; WORDS-HI, BAN ME. The silver trophy for the most amazing numbergram goes to this triple jump of 4, 5, and 6 letters:

CORN (3,15,18,14) = DREAM (4,18,1,5,13) = ARCADE (1,18,3,1,4,5)

For numberdromes, do the same conversion of a non-palindrome to find a set of numbers that reads the same backward as well as forward. For instance, CAM has letter values 3,1,13, which form a palindromic set (3 1 1 3) by dropping the commas. Numberdromes are much rarer than numbergrams. Here are some more, which I uncovered after half a fortnight of burning the palindromic candle at both ends: IS, DON, FOP, BALL, HALR. You can check their num-



ericity. The gold medal for the longest numberdrome goes to the incredible 6-letter

DAEMON (4,1,5,13,15,14) = (4 1 5 1 3 1 5 1 4)

What is the longest numbergram that can be made? Can a numberdrome of 7 or more letters be located? Can a numberdrome that's also a numbergram be found? Pick a word, any word, and try your luck!

### Feeling Rejected?

The rejection slip--that counterfeit currency of the publishing world! It should be declared illegal, immoral, and incorrigible. The offending editor ought to be tarred and feathered with indelible ink and quill pens, and then exiled to a deserted iceberg afloat near the North Pole. Until that happens, I slip the rejection slip into an envelope and zoom it right back, along with my own printed form, the...

### REJECTION SLIP REJECTION SLIP

Dear Editor:

Thank you very much for your recent rejection slip. I am sorry to say that it is not what I am looking for at the present time, but this is no reflection on its literary merit. Please don't be discouraged by this form letter: I truly appreciate your thinking of me, and I hope you'll continue rejecting my work in the future.

I read your entire rejection slip with great interest. It displays an extraordinary sensitivity and a brilliant mastery of the genre. Such passionate use of the language makes even the best efforts of Hemingway and Steinbeck seem like the puny posturings of illiterate hacks. Your daring imagery would inspire Nobel and Pulitzer Prize Committees to raise their hands to the heavens, sing hosannas to your muse, and dance in rapturous ecstasy. What sheer poetry--enchantingly joyful, hauntingly sorrowful--a searing roller-coaster to emotional fireworks exploding with a scathing commentary on the human condition. A tour de force! I couldn't put it down for almost six minutes. Gripping, suspenseful, a real page-turner!

In fact, I'm turning the page over right now, inserting it into an envelope, and sending it back to you with my best wishes. Since it undoubtedly represents the pinnacle of your creative powers, I'm certain you'll want to frame it and hang it above your fireplace. Let me know when a volume of your collected rejection slips is published. I would be happy to review it in *The Rejection Slip Quarterly*.

Literally Yours,

David Morice, Starving Writer